

March 1, 2010

Washington, DC - Rep. Ben Ray Luján issued the following statement on the Senate GOP blocking an emergency extension of unemployment benefits, transportation project funding, health insurance for the unemployed (COBRA) and other important provisions. Last week, the House of Representatives passed emergency legislation to extend these programs. These provisions expired last night at midnight, leaving thousands of Americans out of work or without the benefits they need to make ends meet.

"I'm disappointed that a Republican Senator has blocked important extensions that help people who are struggling the most during these difficult economic times," said Rep. Luján. "We have to stand up for the American people, not resort to partisan games."

The emergency legislation includes a 30-day extension of a range of programs that expired last night, including unemployment insurance, help for unemployed workers in paying for health care (COBRA), small business loan guarantees, the highway bill, and flood insurance. It also delays cuts in Medicare physician payments to make sure that seniors have reliable access to their doctors.

These extensions were passed with unanimous support in the House. They are critical to the millions of families who are struggling to make ends meet during this difficult economic time. Republican Senator Jim Bunning of Kentucky is filibustering the legislation. His effort will have severe effects on the American people, including the following:

- Nearly 1.2 million jobless workers will become ineligible for federal unemployment benefits in March with extended unemployment insurance program expiring.
- Letting the highway program lapse could put 90,000 jobs at risk in March - a critical time at the start of construction season - as bills submitted by states or local transit agencies for highway and transit projects would go unpaid starting Monday morning.
- Up to 2 million families could lose their access to broadcast television signals, after Sunday night.
- More than 32,000 jobs are endangered at the start of the construction season because \$925 million in highway reimbursements and transit grants to states have been blocked.
- 47 million elderly Americans enrolled in Medicare could lose access to their doctors due to the cut in Medicare physician payments.

